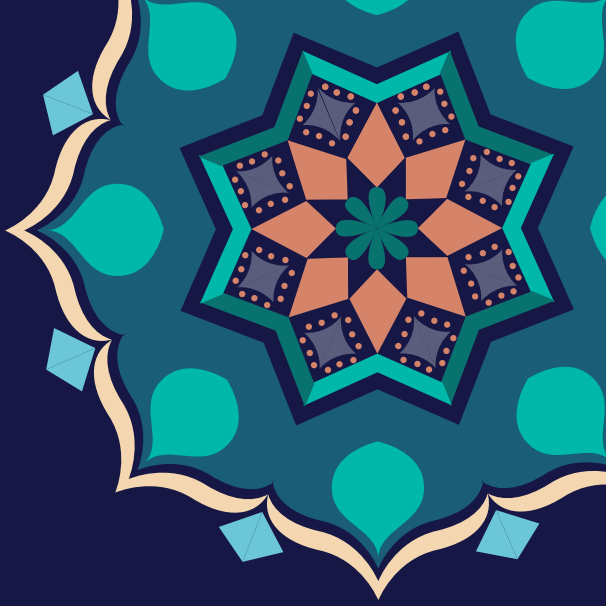

A GUIDE TO PUBLIC SPEAKING FOR ULAMA

by Cassim Sulaiman Peer

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And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah and acts righteously and says, "Indeed, I am of the Muslims."?

Al Qur'an 41.33

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DEDICATION

This booklet is dedicated for the Isaal-e-Thawab of my beloved parents.

May Almighty Allah forgive all their sins and protect them from the difficulties of the grave, May He make their graves into gardens from the Gardens of Jannah and Grant them Jannatul Firdose without reckoning,

Aameen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All praise is due to Almighty Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Cherisher. I thank Him for blessing me with the opportunity to serve His Deen and inspiring me to write this humble publication.

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My very special thanks and gratitude also to my wife and children for their input, advices and assistance. She has been a great inspiration in my life giving of herself unconditionally to me, my family and anyone in need.

My gratitude also to so many of our brothers and sisters for their financial

assistance in producing, printing, translating and distributing this booklet far and wide to assist the young Ulama and Muallimas in South Africa and abroad.

My thanks also go to all others who assisted me in various ways and participated and enabled me to complete this project.

We pray that Almighty Allah accept all their efforts and contributions and reward them abundantly, and make this work a valuable tool and instrument for our young Muslims leaders to reach out and spread this beautiful Deen to all corners of the world, in shaa Allah.

Aameen Ya Rabbal Alamin.

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INTRODUCTION

All praises are due to Allah Ta'ala and may His choicest blessings and salutations be upon His most beloved Nabi ﷺ .

The voices of our honourable Ulama have been drowned out. Their messages have been relegated to the margins as the lure of social media and other online pursuits capture the attention of the community. We believe as Muslims that our lives should be focused on seeking the pleasure of Allah. Our lives ought to be structured around the five salaahs. Sadly however, many of us have forfeited this obligation. Instead, we are engaged in the endless pursuit of worldly pleasure – competing with each other in the accumulation of wealth and power, often without regard to the permissibility of what we do.

The responsibility of the Ulama, the learned among us, then is to alert us to the folly of our actions and give guidance on how to play our roles as khulafaa, as representatives of Almighty Allah on earth.

The Ulama are therefore bound to utilise every opportunity to reach out to members of the community, particularly the youth, to empower and enable them to address the challenges facing the world today.

It is with this intention that this humble servant has compiled some basic guidelines for our beloved Ulama and Students of Deen to improve the efficacy of their lectures. After all, it is our noble scholars who must inevitably be called upon to share their knowledge and give guidance to audiences in Masaajid, schools, work, Madrassah and other gatherings.

It is hoped that these advices will serve as building blocks for our young Ulama who have embarked on a journey to serve humanity for the pleasure of Allah. As they progress on their noble journey these advices will, in shaa Allah become second nature to them and their tasks will be made easier and they will be more effective in conveying the message of Islam far and wide.

I have intentionally made this a short and precise work, using simple language so that it can be easily and quickly understood and implemented.

This book has been divided into two parts, the first part addresses the approach to public speaking and the second tackles the more technical aspects of public speaking. It is by no means authoritative but rather a gentle and humble effort to enliven the bonds between Ulama and awaam.

May Allah Ta'ala accept this humble effort and make this booklet a means of guidance and enrichment to our Ulama and the entire Ummah.

O Allah, I beg You, keep my intention pure always.

Aameen.

Part One: Approach

1. DUA AND SUPPLICATION

Above all else, the help of Almighty Allah is the prerequisite for any action and particularly more so when you have been chosen to convey His message. So before your talk, make Dua to Allah Ta'ala that He accepts your efforts, helps your speech, guides your thoughts and makes you a means of guidance for the people. It is also advisable to read two Raka'ah Salaatul Hajat before your talk, and beseech Allah Ta'ala for His help and guidance. Also, make a few moments of muraqabah and ask Almighty Allah to inspire your heart and guide your words. Try and give some Sadaqah prior to your talk. These are incredibly important practices.

Also make Dua for your audience – a person who is speaking to a group of people must make Dua for their guidance. The Dua of a sincere person can, at times, be more effective than his speech

2. SPEAKING FROM THE HEART

The first and fundamental requirement for delivery of a bayaan is that it must be sincere – it must come from the heart. But what does this actually mean? The person delivering the bayaan must speak from their heart with the intention of helping and guiding the listener. It must also be done solely for the pleasure of Allah. He must speak to the heart of the listener with utmost sincerity and conviction that Almighty Allah will guide him and give guidance to the listener through his effort. That would be the niyah with which he would address the audience.

When we refer to heart-to-heart what it requires is that you speak from your heart directly to another heart.

In order for us to really get to grips with that heart-to-heart concept, the first requirement is humility. It's knowing and understanding your shortcomings and your faults as a human being and being eternally grateful to Almighty Allah for His mercy upon you: "O Allah you know me better than anyone else. You know how I am struggling and despite that, O Allah you are honouring me and giving me this opportunity to be in this position where I can address your servants".

You must understand that it is Almighty Allah who gave you that position and that honour. It is not simply because you are the Imam or a guest speaker. It is purely Allah's mercy upon you. When Almighty Allah bestows such an honour upon us, we are extremely grateful to Him and that gratitude translates into humility: "O Allah I'm only here because You have honoured me and allowed me to stand before Your servants. I cannot speak two words if it is not from Your kindness and Your generosity on me and with what you have blessed me in my words, in my thoughts and in my innermost feelings."

Before speaking perform two rakaahs of Salatul Hajat and read the Dua of Moosa (AS) and then beg: "O Allah, You inspire my heart with words which will inspire the hearts of the people that are listening."

Your words must touch the hearts of the listeners. It is not sufficient that people come out of a talk and say "Masha Allah what a brilliant talk". The question arises- has any of that touched their hearts? When the talk touches the heart they must internalize what you have shared with them. They must realise the issues they need to work on - things they need to correct in themselves.

You are able to touch the hearts of your listeners when you have absolute conviction in what you are speaking about, absolute sincerity, and absolute love for your subject. How do you achieve this? Absolute love for your subject means complete surrender to Almighty Allah and deep love for His Deen. So whatever you say in your talk, it is speaking from that deep love. When a person has that approach in their talk, that is what comes through and that is what touches the hearts. Remember, your words will be inspired by Almighty Allah. Even though you might prepare a speech, you will find, as you go along, you will be inspired to recall and remember other points, issues and lessons which will add great value in explaining your subject matter. It is surely Almighty Allah who inspires that in your heart.

It may also happen that there are people in the audience with a specific question in their mind or a difficult problem, and they may have made Dua: "O Allah You guide me on this, O Allah You help me with this" and Almighty Allah, in his mercy, will inspire your words and thoughts to give that person the guidance and answers to his challenges. That is what heart-to-heart is.

Your message must come from deep within your heart, and then it will touch the hearts of other people. If your talk, for example, is on the importance of following the sunnah and if you yourself don't follow the sunnah, then it's empty words. It will not touch the hearts of your listeners because it's not coming from your heart.

Yes, you know your subject, you've done extensive research, but most importantly you must have a very strong conviction of and belief in what you are saying. Your words must reinforce your heart first, then it will touch the hearts of your audience. That is what we call heart-to-heart.

3. WHAT TO REMEMBER

Sincerity is the most crucial aspect of any bayaan, otherwise any bayaan is not worth the effort. We should not be seeking to impress people as great orators or to be considered very pious and knowledgeable. This should never be our aim and objective. Our main objective should be the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala.

In one Qudsi Hadith, Allah Ta'ala says, "That person who joins Me with someone else (in his intention) when doing any action, then I separate Myself from that person, as well as the work he is doing. I accept only those actions which are done solely for Me."

Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (R) has suggested that a speaker should look for shortcomings, deficiencies and knowledge gaps in his own life, and do research and talk about these issues. This will increase ikhlaas and empathy and encourage implementation and practice.

When a person performs an act only for Allah Ta'ala, then Allah Ta'ala will fill that act with blessings and He will make that person a source of guidance and hidayah for others.

4. SIMPLICITY AND RELEVANCE

It is essential that your lecture is accessible and easy to understand. In order to achieve this, use simple words and language. Gauge your audience – age group, professions, educational and economic levels etc. to ensure that your subject and language is appropriate. It does not make sense to speak about honesty in business to an audience of mostly working class people.

Also choose a topic which is appropriate for the occasion. If you have been invited to deliver a talk at a Nikah, then select subject matter that is relevant to that context.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would advise people to speak to others in accordance with their intellect. If you are speaking to a group of young people, then speak to them in ways that they can relate to, in style and subject matter. Similarly, when speaking to an elderly audience, speak to them with respect and humility on subjects that are relevant to them.

It is also important to translate Arabic/Urdu words and phrases into English. Never take it for granted that your audience would know their meanings. This will create greater understanding and accessibility.

It is also very useful to include metaphors, anecdotes and real life incidents and situations in explaining your points. This will increase the validity and relevance of what is being related. Remember not to use any names of individuals unless it is used as an indication of good values and actions.

It is also very important to be familiar with current affairs and the challenges facing society and the Muslim world at large. There is no shortage of information. We are blessed with great scholars, both past and present. Do continuous research and read as much as possible to widen your knowledge base. You will then be able to tailor your talks to address these effectively so that members of the congregation have an Islamic perspective on issues instead of resorting to the non-Muslim propaganda and biased media.

5. CONFIDENCE

Be confident and at ease when talking. Hesitancy and nervousness can give an impression of inadequacy and lack of knowledge of the subject matter. Sometimes, the audience can seem bored, but you can liven things up with some witty and halal comments. This must be spontaneous. Whilst every public speaker puts on a "persona" when they get on the podium, it must fit in with their personality. You can be professional and fun at the same time as long as it is appropriate. Keeping a balanced approach is imperative.

Also try to modulate your tone and pitch in order to emphasise important aspects and points. Remember a monotone can be boring to the listeners. Never scream at your audience.

6. PREPARATION

Preparation is very important when giving talks. When a person prepares well, his confidence is reflected in his speech and body gestures. It demands the attention of the audience and eliminates stemmering and stuttering. It is also important to reference your work as much as you can to add value to your bayaan. It would also be very beneficial to take along your notes of specific references which you intend to use in your talk. This would add much credibility to the views that you would espouse in your talk.

Ensure that you quote correctly from Quraan and Hadith. Remember when a person relates from these sources incorrectly, or with a defective translation and explanation, he will be held answerable for his actions.

7. FOCUS AND CONCENTRATION

When preparing your bayaan, it is important to ensure that you focus deeply on the task at hand. The ability to focus is the difference between success and failure. The more laser-focused you are in your research and thinking, the more you can get done, and the better will be the quality of your work. You can train your brain to be more focused, intentional and attentive.

The secret is intense work. It is work done in a state of deep concentration to the exclusion of all interruptions.

How to Engage in Intense Work.

Engaging in Intense Work is a deliberate practice of focusing your attention on your chosen subject, in isolation, for a specified time, without any distraction resulting in uninterrupted concentration.

Practically, you confine yourself in your study/ room, with the books, notes etc. that you need, making certain that you will have no distractions, no visitors, no phone calls, no facebook, no twitter, no emails, for a specific time period and focus strongly and fully on the task of pondering upon, articulating and recording the thoughts that will be included in your talk.

This state of intense work in seclusion will, in shaa Allah, enable you to focus deeply on your subject, opening your mind to a level of understanding, comprehension, perception and appreciation which is never possible under the circumstances that prevail in the busy environment which is the norm today.

Part Two: The Technique

7. STRUCTURE YOUR BAYAAN

A speech is like a journey – it has purpose, direction and an ultimate goal or destination.

Remember Allah in everything you do. In the beginning of any speech, say Bismillah and read a short Ayah from the noble Quran pertaining to your topic. Aside from the reward earned from reciting the Quran and remembering Almighty Allah, it will free yourself from nervousness.

Always begin with introducing the topic in broad terms and its relevance to society and your congregation. You could also begin anecdotally by sharing an incident or event related to your subject, and this will quickly attract the attention of your audience.

This is followed by the main body where you discuss the subject matter in some detail. Your bayaan must enable your audience to learn from it, share it with their families and implement it in their own lives. Where you are discussing the ills of society, guide them on how to avoid these ills and also provide a remedy. It is not helpful simply to declare things to be haram or condemn people for their behaviour. Show empathy. Provide some good advice on how a person can remedy his faults. Remember that the bayaan should be a "Heart-to-Heart". Let it come from your heart directly to his heart and that will make all the difference.

Conclude your Bayaan with a strong message which will motivate and inspire members of the congregation to take urgent steps to correct their lives where there are shortcomings.

8. KEY MESSAGE

The objective of any bayaan or speech is to ensure that the audience understands your message and is able to implement the advices you are imparting. So what also matters in your talk in addition to confidence, stage presence or clear speech is having ***something worth saying***.

Sometimes when you preparing your talk, you may find that you may get

confused about how to make the points. It may also happen sometimes that you feel as if you are going down a rabbit hole of rambling sentences, incomplete thoughts and disjointed ideas.

The reason for this is that you are not clear on your objective or mission. There's no through-line to hold your arguments together and, so, the content feels jumbled and confused.

This happens essentially, when you lack a BIG IDEA — that powerful insight, perspective, or thought that serves as the backbone of your presentation; the big idea is the spine that holds everything up. It is like a "gift" transferred from the speaker to the audience;

Without a big idea to light the way, you'll wander aimlessly and go around in circles.

By organising your thoughts into one clear and succinct big idea — you can communicate with conviction and precision. And your audience will benefit from its clarity and focus.

Here's one simple way to help you cut through the distractions and get to the heart of your message:

PROCEDURE

1. First, decide on the topic you want to focus upon.
(As mentioned earlier, do your in-depth research, including relevant Quranic Ayas and Ahadith, to enable you to support and explain your thoughts and understanding of the subject.)

2. Then articulate your key message in *one sentence*.
Distilling your key message into a single sentence will make your preparation flow better, and make your key points easier to arrange. Any piece of data, story, or anecdote that doesn't fit in with your single sentence must be deleted otherwise it will wind up sidetracking you and diluting your message.

3. Build your presentation based on your *one sentence*
Think of the single sentence as a lighthouse guiding you through fog. If you have an abundance of information and data, the single sentence will help you stay on track. It will help you to make the choices regarding what

information to keep and what to set aside in your speech.

Whether you are giving a Jumuah bayaan or addressing any other gathering, you need to first come up with that key message you want to leave with your audience. Let that key message be your PRIME GOAL. If you do that, it will be much easier to craft a clear and compelling message when you sit down to prepare your talk.

9. KNOW YOUR SUBJECT MATTER

Nothing can be worse than delivering a bayaan without knowing your subject matter well. Research, Research, Research! -do intensive research on every aspect of your subject. If you make statements that are false, doubtful or incorrect, not only is it sinful, it will completely destroy your credibility as a scholar and will impact on your role as a guide and mentor.

Be aware that any gaps in your research will be noticed and questioned by someone in the audience. To avoid any awkward moments, make sure there are no holes, sweeping statements or uncertainties in your content.

10. TIME LIMITS

Always arrive on time at your venue. Do not make your audience wait for you. In fact, it is advisable to arrive a little earlier and do Muraqabah and Dua as mentioned previously.

Do not be too long-winded in your talk. Keep to time limits otherwise your audience will lose concentration and get restless.

Generally you will be given a time limit for your speech. Comply, and do not rush your lecture to finish in time. Be considerate - people may have to get back to work or have other commitments after the talk.

11. TIME MANAGEMENT

In your preparation, use the premise that 2000 words will equate to approximately 10 minutes talking time. So for an hour's speech you will need approximately 10000-12000 words. It may seem difficult if you plan to write this much for a speech but after some experience this will come naturally to you. Remember also, that this written speech is not intended to be read out at the event, but rather to enable you to plan and structure your talk to be

more effective and beneficial for your listeners.

In your preparation, remember , It is better to have too much information instead of finishing a lecture ten minutes early.

12. AIDS AND NOTES

There is no shame in taking some notes to help you in your talk. You can use aids such as index cards, with key words, or headings. Just record the main points you wish to make so that you cover all the important aspects of your subject matter. It is not advisable to read out your full speech to your audience. However, it can be very helpful to write out some key sentences in full to save you time, because, sometimes, it may take two or more sentences to explain a point, which can be better said in a well-crafted sentence prepared beforehand.

If you have prepared some notes, it is advisable to look at them before you arrive at the venue to refresh your memory.

On the issue of Notes: Ulama have found it very useful to maintain a lever-arch file to store copies of all special research done in respect of specific issues which might otherwise not be immediately available when needed, or information that comes from a source that is not easily accessible.

13. HARNESS YOUR BREATHING

If you feel nervous, take a few deep breaths and speak slowly at first. If you speak too fast, you will confuse yourself. Be calm and in control of what you say. Always look to Allah Ta'ala as the Provider of your strength. Keep Him in your heart always and use Him as a means of spurring you on. When you speak, imagine the room is empty and that only Allah Ta'ala is there with you, listening to you and being proud of you.

Harness the power of breathing in order to speak with confidence and power:

1. Start with the right posture. Stand straight. Breathe in deeply. Make sure your shoulders are back, not hunched. This is the best posture for speaking as you are standing tall and you are resonating confidence

2. Speak "on the breath." Once you take in that full breath, you might not know what to do with it. Instead of holding it in, use that breath to support your words, letting it out steadily while you are speaking. In order to support the voice, you need a constant, full breath of air through the entire sentence. When you speak, practise exhaling slowly while speaking and letting your voice resonate with a full, supported sound.

How often should you breathe? At the very least, at the end of every sentence. If you are prone to rushing through your speech or presentation, then practise breathing at every punctuation mark — it will force you to slow down.

This technique will give your voice richness and fullness so that the power of your voice matches the power of your words. If you do that, your audience will listen more attentively.

14. CONNECT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

Good eye contact communicates both personal confidence and respect for your audience. Depending on the type of event and the venue and, following the guidelines of Islam, engage your audience by ensuring that you make eye contact with everyone.

The trend of trying to imitate "celebrity" speakers must be avoided at all costs. There is no need for this at all. Remember, your duty is not to impress but to deliver the message.

Respect for your audience is imperative. Avoid speaking down at them. Overzealousness and harshness is not an acceptable practice.

15. JUMUAH LECTURE

For the Jumuah bayaan, practise all the Qur'anic verses and Ahadith you will be using beforehand so that you can recite it fluently.

The chronology should be as follows: Praise of Allah Ta'ala, Durood on our Beloved Nabi ﷺ , Qur'anic verses pertaining to your topic, Ahadith pertaining to your topic.

Avoid reciting long passages in Arabic, which most of your audience would not understand. There is very little time in a Jumuah lecture. A good method would be to mention and translate one or two important Arabic words from the text.

The Jumuah lecture is extremely important because many people don't get an opportunity or are not willing to attend lectures and bayaans generally but, Alhumdulillah, they usually attend the Jumuah programme. This presents a golden opportunity to the Ulama to reach out to them and create an awareness of the Deen in their hearts. Innovative methods must be used to attract their attention. A very effective approach would be to cover current issues and explain the Islamic perspective on it, and give some guidelines on how these can be addressed.

CONCLUSION

Follow these advices, and with regular practice, you will, in shaa Allah, become a good communicator. Learn from your mistakes and try not to repeat them next time.

We pray that this little effort will assist our young Ulama to convey the precious message of our beautiful Deen to the Ummah of our Beloved Nabi ﷺ and indeed, humanity at large. May you become accomplished scholars and may Allah Ta'ala accept and use you for the promotion and propagation of Deenul Islam, Aameen.

The author requests your very special Duas for him, his parents and his family.

NOTES

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